UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/26378
30 August 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 27 AUGUST 1993 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I.
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF CROATIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to submit, enclosed herewith, the letter from Dr. Pero Franjic, Diocesan Vicar for Displaced Persons and Refugees, written in the name of the Vrhbosanski Archdiocesan Ordinariate. The enclosed letter contains important data about extermination of Catholics in some major regions of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is the firm belief of the Croatian Government that the tragic situation that is endangering Catholics in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina raises questions that deserve the full attention of the international community and require appropriate action by the Security Council.

I would be grateful if you would provide for the distribution of this letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vladimir DROBNJAK
Chargé d'affaires, a.i.

Annex

VRHBOSANSKI ARCHDIOCESAN ORDINARIATE
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Ref.: V-411a/93; Zagreb, 18 August 1993

EXTERMINATION OF CATHOLICS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF VRHBOSNA - SARAJEVO

PRELIMINARY NOTES

It is nearly three years now that the war in former Yugoslavia has been raging. The initial reports moved many people. What followed suit were protests and humanitarian actions. The world showed a lot of sympathy for the Bosnian population, especially for Muslims who were real victims at the time. However, few reports on the plight of Bosnian Catholics were circulating. The succeeding detailed information is designed for well-meaning readers and we hope that it will appeal to their conscience. The world and the Catholic Church should do something without any delay to prevent further extermination of this once flourishing local church at the end of the 10th century.

I. The pre-war situation before 1992

Before the war in Bosnia, which started in April 1992, the Archdiocese of Vrhbosna - Sarajevo was the most prosperous archdiocese in the former Yugoslavia.

1. In the church province of Bosnia-Herzegovina (together with the Dioceses of Mostar and Banja Luka) the Archdiocese of Vrhbosna - Sarajevo was the biggest and had 528,422 Catholics who lived in 13 Deaneries or 144 parishes. Its 204 ordained priests, together with the Franciscans from the "Bosnia Argentea" Province (with more than 240 Fathers), worked closely with their own people, but were also active in other Croatian dioceses, many of them abroad,, especially in Germany. There were also 4-5 Jesuit Fathers and 3-4 Dominicans. Sarajevo had two High Schools of Theology, one for priests with 65-70 students, the other for Franciscans with 75-85 students. In the town of Visoko the Franciscans had a grammar-school and a seminary (with about 90 priest candidates). The seminary attendants of the the Archdiocese attended courses in the Zadar Grammar-School (62 candidates).

2. Many ordained sisters were very active within the Archdiocese. They held 3 provincial homes: those of St.Vincent, the Franciscans and the Servants of the Child Jesus. Their number was 335. In addition to it, the Archdiocese had 5 other Congregations with about 150 ordained sisters. Together they had 24 convents. They were engaged in pastoral work in parishes, hospitals, old people's homes and in recent years (after the fall of communism) in schools as teachers of religion.

3. The Bosnian Catholic youth used to like working outside the Archdiocese as priest candidates and ordained fathers. There is hardly a diocese or a monastery in Croatia where they cannot be found. It can be partly explained by the fact that our Catholics tend to have large families in which more brothers and sisters opt for the spiritual profession.

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4. After World War 2, in spite of the big pressure exerted on us by the communist regime, we managed (although with foreign help) to renew all our sacred buildings, but most of them were newly built. It is worth noting that the Archbishops of Sarajevo formed 38 parishes after World War 2 and at least 15 were planned for the immediate future.

5. The Archdiocese did not comprise any major historic monuments (because they had all been destroyed by Turks during 450 years of their rule), with the exception of 7 Franciscan cloisters containing a lot of treasures from our history: archives, libraries, church inventories, etc. All this property is now seriously endangered.

II. The Serbian aggression and devastation

In April 1992 Serbs started an aggression against Bosnia under the pretext that they were endangered by Croats and Muslims. This aggression had a clear-cut plan: to perform the "ethnic cleansing" on the occupied territories, which means expelling or killing all Croats and Muslims with an aim to have Serbs as the only survivors there. The world has learnt a lot about the brutality of the practice through mass media. The final results for the Archdiocese of Vrhbosna - Sarajevo are disastrous, as shown by the statistics below.

III. The new Muslim aggression against Bosnian Catholics

Considering the fact that Serbs have occupied 70% of the Bosnian territory (mostly the parts populated by Muslims), they have performed there complete ethnic cleansing. About a half of Muslims fled to the West and the other half remained in the Bosnian "free" zones". Initially they were defending these zones together with Croats, although they were always extremely suspicious in relation to the Catholic Croats. Their fundamentalist zeal and awareness of being deprived of too much territory were the motives behind their decision to start a fierce and open attack on the areas of Catholic Croats. Unfortunately, the western media bring scarce reports on it and it is often argued that Muslims are endangered by Croats. However, the succeeding statistics shows a completely different picture.

STATISTICS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF VRHBOSNA - SARAJEVO

According to data collected by parishes and other official sources, the situation in the Archdiocese of Vrhbosna - Sarajevo is extremely dramatic. We are faced with compulsory extermination practiced by two sides: by Serbs over a period of two years now and, unfortunately, by Muslim this year. We appeal to the conscience of those responsible. We have to raise our voice also because daily reports arriving from Bosnia are extremely biased.

The figures about every deanery show the pre-war number of Catholics and their present lot. The meaning of signs used:

1 = parish taken by Serbs and "ethnically cleansed"
2 = parish partly taken by Serbs or under continuous attack
3 = parish taken by Muslims, Catholics expelled
4 = parish under continuous Muslim attack or exposed to harassment, making any normal life impossible.

A. Deaneries in Northern Bosnia

I. D e r v e n t a Deanery

1. Bijelo Brdo 1	2,191
2. Bosanski Brod 1	4,780
3. Bukovica 1	1,250
4. Brusnica 1	1,350
5. Cer 1	2,950
6. Derventa 1	8,380
7. Foča 1	3,990
8. Gornja M Sijekovac 1	1,792
9. Kolibe 1	1,950
10. Koraće 1	3,258
11. Kulina	950
12. Plehan 1	8,120
13. Novo Selo 1	3,050
14. Veliki Prnjavor - Sočanica 1	1,750
15. Žeravac 1	2,720
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	48,481

II. D o b o r Deanery

16. Čardak 1	3,264
17. Donja Tremošnica 1	2,732
18. Garevac 1	2,943
19. Gradačac 1	1,990
20. Gornja Stubica 1	7,530
21. Gornja Tremošnica 1	2,250
22. Modriča 1	3,532
23. Odžak 1	2,945
24. Pećnik 1	2,350
25. Posavska Mahala 1	1,508
26. Potočani 1	4,523
27. Srednja Slatina 1	993
28. Svilaj 1	4,215
29. Turić 1	1,690
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	42,465

Both Deaneries were occupied by Serbs last year and completely "cleansed". No Catholics have stayed behind, although they were a majority population there. Most of them now live in Croatia, many also abroad. The Catholic priests and ordained brothers and sisters have also left with them.

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III. Bosanski Šamac Deanery

30. Bosanski Šamac 1	1,290
31. Domaljevac 2	5,920
32. Hrvatska Tišina 1	5,982
33. Kopanice 1 2	1,390
34. Oštra Luka-Bok 2	7,350
35. Prud 1	1,987
36. Tolisa 2	13,850
37. Vidovice 1 2	2,797
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	40,566

Serbs have occupied parishes Nos. 30, 32, 33, 35 and 37 and expelled their population. However, parishes Nos. 31, 34 and 36 have been partly liberated. But the civilians cannot survive there. Parishes Nos. 31, 34 and 36 have not yet been occupied, but about 10,000 Catholics have fled from as a result of continuous attacks. 17,120 Catholics are still there and try to defend their territory. They are accompanied by 3 parish priests, 3 chaplains and 5 Franciscans in the Tolisa Monastery. Others had to flee together with their flock.

IV. Brčko Deanery

38. Bijeljina 1	810
39. Boće 2	2,950
40. Brčko 1	2,486
41. Dubrave 2	7,962
42. Gorice 1	1,952
43. Krepšić 1	913
44. Poljaci 2	2,212
45. Ulice1 1	5,350
46. Zovik 2	3,860
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	28,495

The parishes Nos. 38, 40, 42, 43 and 45 have been occupied by Serbs and "ethnically cleansed". Parishes Nos. 39, 41, 44 and 46 are on the front-line and partly occupied by Serbs. 8,500 Catholics have fled from the territory and only 8,474 with 6 priests left behind.

B. Deaneries in Central Bosnia

V. T u z l a Deanery

47. Breške	4,980
48. Dragunja	2,995
49. Drijenča	1,984
50. Lukavac	3,238
51. Morančani	4,250
52. Par Selo	2,110
53. Tuzla	9,917
54. Šikara	4,210
55. Špionica	3,425
56. Živinice	3,972
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	41,081

These Catholics are a minority among Muslims whose territory has been partly occupied by Serbs and is exposed to continuous attacks. That is why about 15,000 Catholics have abandoned the area. All priests and chaplains have remained with their flock.

Due to the conflict between Croats and Muslims in other parts of the country, the situation here is also highly dramatic. It is feared that an explosion may be imminent.

VI. U s o r a Deanery

57. Bežlja 1	3,010
58. Doboj 1	4,172
59. Gornja Komušina 1	1,810
60. Jelah 2	1,995
61. Komušina 1	3,315
62. Sivša 2	7,850
63. Teslić 1	2,950
64. Ularice 2	1,816
65. Žabljak 2	1,793
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	28,711

Parishes Nos. 57, 58, 59 and 63 have been occupied by Serbs and the Catholics have been expelled. Parishes Nos. 60, 63, 64 and 65 are on the front-line and even occupied to a certain extent. About 6,000 Catholics have fled and only 7,454 stayed there together with 4 parish priests and 2 chaplains. In spite of occupation, the parish priest Pero Tunjić has stayed in Teslić for a very small group of Catholics.

VII. Žepče Deanery

66. Crkvica 3	5,650
67. Čajdraš 3	1,660
68. Globarice 4	810
69. Klopče 3	1,450
70. Lovnica 3	1,020
71. Lug - Brankovići 4	1,950
72. Maglaj 3	1,510
73. Novi Šeher 4	6,950
74. Osova 4	4,511
75. Radunice 4	813
76. Zavidovići 3	4,110
77. Zenica sv. Ilija 3	7,600
78. Zenica sv. Josip 3	8,200
79. Žepče 4	6,380
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	52,614

None of these parishes have been occupied by Serbs. However, all proposed divisions of territories among three peoples in Bosnia, i.e. Muslims, Croats and Serbs, assign this area to Muslims. That is why in recent months Muslims have taken all positions in the district city of Zenica and started expelling Croats on a massive scale from parishes Nos. 66, 67, 69, 70, 76, 77, 78 (a total of 29,690 Catholics). About 10,000 Catholics have fled. Parishes Nos. 70 and 72 have been occupied by the Muslim militia, as if they were their own territory. Muslim even force Catholics to fight other Croats in Central Bosnia. Other Catholics in parishes Nos. 67, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74 and 78 are completely surrounded and exposed to continuous attacks. Alone in July 152 Catholic defenders plus 120 civilians were killed. About 5,000 people have fled from this "cauldron". It is feared that Muslims will soon occupy the entire area. All priests are still there with their flock.

C. Deaneries in Southwestern Bosnia

VIII. Travnik Deanery

80. Brajkovići 3	6,350
81. Bučići 4	2,850
82. Dolac 3	4,030
83. Guča Gora 3	4,632
84. Korićani 1	893
85. Nova Bila 4	4,780
86. Novi Travnik 4	4,070
87. Ovčarevo 3	5,198
88. Pećine 3	3,754
89. Potkraj 1	1,991
90. Rankovići 4	2,995

91. Rostovo 3	850
92. Travnik 3	2,993
93. Turbe 1	1,640
94. Vitez 4	12,123
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	59,149

According to all international plans and combinations, this territory should remain "Croatian". However, from the very beginning of the war many expelled Muslims arrived in this area and completely changed its demographic picture. Parishes Nos. 84, 89 and 93 have been taken by Serbs. In the beginning Croats and Muslims were jointly defending this area, but tensions started in spring this year and both the newly arrived and indigenous Muslims fiercely attacked the Catholic Croats. They have succeeding in conquering the bulk of the territory from which they have expelled all Catholics, who were forced to escape to Croatia through the Serbian-held territory. These are parishes Nos. 80, 82, 83, 87, 88, 91 and 92. Special damage has been inflicted to the Franciscan Guča Gora Monastery which contained an archive, a museum, and a library. Muslims looted the place and then set fire on it. Similar acts were committed in other occupied parishes. The rest of the parishes are exposed to continuous attacks and it is feared that Catholics are going to lose everything. Sizeable groups of people of about 8,000 have already fled the area. There are still 10 priests doing their duty in the Deanery.

XI. B u g o j n o Deanery

95. Bugojno 3	17,200
96. Bistrica 3	1,995
97. Dobretići 1	6,150
98. Glavice 3	1,245
99. Gornji Vakuf 4	7,980
100. Kandija 3	1,990
101. Otinovci - Kures 1	2,150
102. Podmilačje 1	8,910
103. Rastičevo 1	569
104. Potkraj 1	2,968
105. Suho Polje 1	1,577
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	52,734

In this area, too, the Catholic Croats were a majority population before the war, but the newly arrived Muslims pushed them to the second place. Serbs have occupied and ethnically cleansed the parishes Nos. 97, 101, 102, 103 and 105. In July this year fighting broke out between Croats and Muslims. In 20 days Muslims occupied nearly the whole area and expelled Catholics to the effect that now the parishes Nos. 95, 96, 98, 100 and 104 are occupied by them. The only remaining parish of Gornji Vakuf was heavily contested and then fell into the Muslim hands. Priests have been expelled, some of them, together with ordained sisters, detained.

X. K r a l j e v a S u t j e s k a Deanery

106. Breza 3	910
107. Borovica 4	1,511
108. Haljinići 3	2,650
109. Jelaške 3	959
110. Kakanj 3	7,935
111. Kraljeva Sutjeska 3	12,650
112. Olovo 3	,790
113. Vareš 4	7,520
114. Vijaka 4	1,386
115. Vukanovići 3	,910
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	37,221

Except for the town of Vareš, Muslims had a majority before the war. As fighting with Croats broke out in other, here, too, Muslims turned fanatic and occupied almost all parishes (except Vareš and too small ones in mountains). Most Catholics have been expelled and a group of refugees moved to the outskirts of Vareš where they live in total isolation. Smaller groups have fled to Croatia. In the occupied parishes there are still a number of priests and Franciscan monks in the Kraljeva Sutjeska Monastery. We are extremely worried about them and the historic documents kept in the monastery. Some 11,000 Catholics have fled from the parish.

XI. K r e š e v o Deanery

116. Banbrdo 4	3,275
117. Brestovsko 4	3,205
118. Busovača 4	10,260
119. Deževice 3	1,230
120. Gromiljak 4	2,210
121. Fojnica 3	7,150
122. Kiseljak 4	5,990
123. Kreševo 4	5,750
124. Visoko 3	1,170
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	40,240

Before the war Croats made a majority of population in this area. Troubles with Muslims started a year ago. In recent fighting they have brought under their control the parishes Nos. 119, 121 and 124 plus a series of villages of the rest of parishes. Due to continuous attacks about 7,000 Catholics have fled the area and wound up in Croatia. Fathers have stayed in the Franciscan Monastery of Fojnica. Little information is reaching us about them and the costly inventory of the monastery, so important for our history.

XII. R a m a Deanery

125. Doljani 3	1,461
126. Gračac 4	2,120
127. Obri 3	1.960
128. Podhum 3	2,360
129. Prozor 4	4,350
130. Rama - Šćit 4	4,300
131. Rumboci 4	2,350
132. Solakova Kula 3	1,059
133. Uzdol 4	1,965
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	21,925

In a part of this area Moslems used to be a majority and were always reserved towards Catholics. Here, too, conflicts escalated in the wake of troubles arisen elsewhere. Muslims have not only occupied the parishes Nos. 127, 128 and 132, but also killed many people. In the parish of Doljani they committed a terrible massacre, which was also reported by UN troops. 40-50 people were brutally slaughtered and the parish church was razed to the ground. 200 people are missing and feared dead. Muslims go on attacking other parishes almost incessantly. That is why about 7,500 people have fled from this deanery. All priests have stayed with their flock, with the exception of the mentioned occupied parishes.

D. S a r a j e v o Deanery

134. SA - Briješće 2, 4	950
135. Čemerno 1	1,520
136. Goražde 1	480
137. Ilijaš 1	1,710
138. Pale 1	395
139. SA - Cathedral 2, 4	4,920
140. SA - Holy Trinity 2, 4	7,530
141. SA - St. Ignatius 1	1,290
142. SA - St. Joseph 2, 4	4,250
143. SA - Stup 2, 4	10,930
144. Tarčin 3	835
Number of Catholics in the Deanery	34,810

The smaller parishes in the surrounding of Sarajevo (Nos. 136, 137 and 139) plus the parish No. 142 and for the most part the parish No. 144 in the city area have been occupied by Serbs. The parish No. 144 is situated 20 km away from the city. Other parishes in the city have been undergoing a real tragedy in the past two years. Hundreds of Catholics have lost their lives during the attacks on the city, many defenders have been killed. These 5 parishes in the city with 29,870 Catholics and together with other inhabitants of the capital have been living for months in encirclement. As a result, about 12,000 Catholics have left the city and fled to the West.

Neither of our High Schools of Theology has been reopened. The Franciscan High School of Theology is occupied by Serbs, together with its complete inventory and library, whereas the other High School although not in Serbian hands, is badly damaged. The Pilgrimage Church in Stup has been damaged in fire; St. Vincent Church has been turned to ruins in shelling. The ordained sisters have been left without 5 convents (occupied by Serbs). Other church buildings: the Bishop's Palace, cloisters, parish churches and buildings are in a very poor state suggesting ruins. To enable the priest candidates to continue their studies, we have been forced to resettle both High Schools of Theology: the Franciscan school in Zagreb and the Diocesan school in the Bol Dominican Monastery in Dalmatia. The Archbishop of Sarajevo together with 20 priests and 43 nuns have stayed in Sarajevo to attend to the endangered people.

In the capital of Sarajevo the Catholics (in the a/m 5 parishes) were always very loyal to the Bosnian Government (mostly composed of Muslims) and ardently defended the city. Hundreds of them have dearly paid for it with their own blood. Recently, however, hatred against Catholic Croats is on the rise and all of a sudden they are being held guilty for everything. In most cases they are losing their positions and jobs. Many have been even driven out of their own flats. It is only the reputation and the courage of the Archbishop of Sarajevo, Monsignor Vinko Puljić, that have so far averted an open assault on Catholics. It is feared, however, that it may soon happen. The parish of Turčin is now completely in Muslim hands.

There is one more thing we want to point out. The rising interest of the world in the plight of Sarajevo is accompanied by a diminishing interest in other places, especially those occupied by Muslims in recent months. The public knows little or nothing about what is going on there. Human beings also live in these places, just as they live in Sarajevo, and concern should also be shown for them. Unfortunately, the Archbishop of Sarajevo, the Caritas representatives and other humanitarian organizations are denied by Muslims any access to these places which thus remain a taboo for us and for the public in general.

Present consequences of the war in Bosnia

1. The number of Catholics before the war	528,492
2. of whom "ethnically cleansed" by Serbs	155,040
3. of whom expelled so far by Muslims	128,434
4. fled for their lives from "free" areas due to attacks	104,000
5. currently exposed to extreme hardships in the Archdiocese	141,018
6. The pre-war number of parishes within the Archdiocese	144
7. Number of parishes occupied by Serbs	56
8. Number of parishes occupied so far by Muslims	34
9. Number of parishes considered "free" as of 18 August 1993	54

There is no "free" parish in which Catholics live normally. Worse than that is the fact that they areabandoning their own territories day in, day out, as a result of compulsion or fear for their lives. In this war about 50,000 Catholics have been killed and roughly the same number missing.

Final Note: It will be a real tragedy if now, at the turn of the century, the once so flourishing Catholic archdiocese were to be exterminated by the Orthodox Serbs and the Muslim fanatics. We have decided to inform on it the international public, because mass media are very biased and often superfluous in their reporting. We are not only crying for humanitarian help, but also appealing to the conscience of the world which should not leave us in the lurch and just watch such a vital cell of the church being strangulated.

Dr. Pero Pranjić, Diocesan Vicar
for Displaced Persons and Refugees